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ABSTRACT

This publication summarizes issues relating to the education of homeless children and youth and reviews programs that are effective in the delivery of educational services to this population. The report is comprised of five sections. The first section, "Introduction," surveys factors contributing to homelessness and indicates the special needs of young people who are homeless. The second section, "Problems in Educating Homeless Children and Youth," examines the following situations: (1) legal barriers, including residency requirements and guardianship requirements; (2) financial constraints, including family-related financial problems and school-related financial problems; (3) institutional impediments, including lack of records, placement in inappropriate programs, lack of coordination, and educational performance problems; and (4) social and psychological concerns, including stress, social acceptance, and self-esteem. The third section, "Federal Legislation for the Homeless," describes provisions of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act for homeless education. The fourth section, "Programs that Work," describes transitional programs in Tacoma (Washington), Salt Lake City (Utah), and San Diego (California), and mainstreamed programs in Venice (California), and New York City. The fifth section, "Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness," restates the need for more innovative educational programs along with economic, domestic, and other changes. A list of 19 references is appended. (AF)

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Educating Homeless Children: Issues and Answers

James H. Stronge, Cheri Tenhouse

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Educating Homeless Children: Issues and Answers

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Introduction

A dramatic increase in the number of homeless families has occurred in recent years. There are a variety of causes for this increase in homelessness, including unemployment, poverty, and reduction in social service programs; insufficient low-cost housing; domestic violence; alcoholism, drug abuse, and health-related problems; and deinstitutionalization. But whatever the causes, the number of problems associated with homelessness are also increasing. The problem of educating homeless children, which was not a public issue as recently as a decade ago, today is receiving national attention.

There is virtually no agreement on the size of the homeless population; nor is there agreement on a definition of "homeless," which has led to confusion and possible manipulation of statistical data on homelessness. While certain categories and descriptions of homelessness are accepted and used consistently, the variables of length and place of stay for homelessness differ substantially from source to source. Studies of the homeless have used different sample populations, a variety of sampling procedures, and various definitions, and thus report conflicting results. Data most often cited by various groups to account for the incidence and types of homeless are based on two conflicting studies conducted in 1983 respectively by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The National Coalition for the Homeless estimated that there were 2 million to 3 million homeless persons in the United States in 1983. HUD concluded that there were only 250,000 to 350,000 homeless in the United States on a given day.

However, there is general agreement that women and children are increasingly represented in greater proportions among the new homeless. Numerous surveys suggest that women and children may represent as much as one-third to one-half of the homeless population. Up to 90% of homeless families are headed by females; many of them are in their mid-20s, and a disproportionate number of them are black. A majority have more than one child, with most of the children age six or younger (Bassuk & Rosenberg 1988).

Homeless children and youth experience numerous educational difficulties. Laws, regulations, and practices in many states and cities effectively prevent them from receiving an education. Also, lack of transportation and lack of coordination among social service agencies are part of the problem. Even when a homeless child is attending school, financial and residential conditions may hinder the educational process.

Homeless youth are a distinct group within the homeless population. While homeless children are usually in the care of parents or others, homeless youth often are not. Literature on homeless youth consistently distinguishes between two categories: Runaways and Throwaways. While both groups usually experience conflict at home and abuse is common to both groups, a distinction is made between the reasons for leaving. Runaways are youth who choose to leave home for various reasons, while throwaways are youth who are "encouraged to leave, asked to leave, or are thrown out of their homes and told not to return" (Adams, Gullotta, and Clancy 1985, p. 716).

The special care needed by homeless children and youth only recently has been recognized. Nonetheless, a few schools and programs have begun promising practices for serving this unique student population. If educators are to meet the challenge of providing an appropriate educational opportunity to the nation's homeless children and youth, an understanding of the nature of homelessness and its concomitant educational problems must be acquired. Educators should know about successful programs for educating homeless children.

Problems in Educating Homeless Children and Youth

Homeless children and youth face a myriad of problems associated with schooling – problems ranging from enrolling in and remaining in school to successfully competing once in school. Problems associated with homelessness (financial difficulties, transiency, etc.) and problems associated with the organization of schools (residency requirements, transportation, etc.) combine to pose formidable barriers to their education. The barriers that are explored in more depth here include legal issues, financial constraints, impediments to taking advantage of educational programs and support services, and social and psychological concerns.

Legal Barriers

Two legal requirements commonly imposed by public schools often prevent homeless children and youth from attending school. These include residency requirements and guardianship requirements.

Residency requirements. Compulsory school attendance is required for children of specified ages. The difficulty with this policy as it applies to homeless children, however, is the restriction that their education take place in the district in which the child resides. When children do not have a permanent address, educational enrollment can be delayed due to lack of a uniform policy. Sometimes, an outright denial of education occurs in school districts that do not want the chil-

dren in their districts. Even if a state assures access to free education, school districts may interpret state procedures in a manner favorable to their own purposes. Other times, school districts may enact local rules that effectively deny education to homeless children by setting up residency requirements that are impossible for homeless children to meet.

Many times the lack of a permanent address leaves the status of the child's school placement uncertain until disagreements over residency are settled. Who is responsible for educating the child – the district of original jurisdiction or the district in which the child is temporarily housed? The lack of a uniform policy in making this type of decision can delay for months the enrollment of the child in either district.

In a 1987 collaborative survey conducted by the Center for Law and Education, the National Coalition for the Homeless, the Homelessness Exchange, and the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services (Schumack 1987), approximately one-third of homeless service providers indicated they were aware of denials of educational access to the homeless. They reported cases in which two residency requirements were used to deny homeless children and youth access to education: a) residency laws used to prohibit access to schools where students had been enrolled before homelessness required a temporary move out of the school attendance area; and b) residency laws used to preclude initial enrollment in schools serving the attendance area in which the homeless children were temporarily housed. Jackson (1989) reported that one-third of shelters surveyed knew of instances in which homeless children were denied access to education due to residency laws.

There are options to the traditional interpretation given to state and local residency regulations. For example, the Salt Lake City program for homeless children identifies the shelter school as the place of residence, thus eliminating the residency barrier. By claiming the shelter school as the place of residence, the school district is able to claim

state funding for students during their enrollment. In an effort to further reduce the negative impact of residency requirements, Salt Lake City established a reciprocal agreement with other school districts, easing the movement of students from district to district.

The San Diego Unified School District developed a similar policy to reduce the burden of state and local residency requirements for homeless children and their families. By establishing inter-district reciprocity policies, homeless students are admitted to the public schools if they are temporarily housed in the city, regardless of where their former residence was.

There is a growing body of litigation concerning residency and the rights of homeless children and youth. Ely (1987) reported that disputes about residency have, for the most part, been dealt with case by case, resulting in a lack of uniform central policy. Most of these cases were settled prior to the enactment of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (discussed in the next chapter) and rely on legal arguments related to school residency laws. It seems reasonable that post-McKinney decisions will yield a more consistent standard for determining residency issues for homeless children and youth.

A variety of legal remedies have been suggested regarding residency. These include challenging discriminatory school residency standards that violate the McKinney Act's specific requirements and due process claims challenging the arbitrary denial of access to homeless students without procedural safeguards. Additionally, if a homeless child is completely excluded from school, not only the McKinney Act but also state constitutional rights to an education and federal equal protection guarantees can be used as a basis for relief.

Guardianship requirements. In most states, children must be enrolled in school by a legal parent or guardian. Homelessness, however, often separates a family. Children who are staying with friends or relatives may not be permitted to register for school. Other times, schools may require a parent's signature for the child to re-enroll after being suspended or dropping out. A school district also may require

guardians to reside in the same district as their charges (Ely 1987). Enforcement of these types of regulations can result in the denial of education to homeless children. In a national survey, homeless shelter providers reported cases in which schools refused to consider homeless children as residents unless the children lived with parents or legal guardians (Schumack 1987).

The McKinney Act, passed in 1987, provides that guardianship issues may not be used to preclude homeless children and youth from school attendance. To meet this goal, a nontraditional approach to guardianship may be necessary. New York City, for example, provides a solution for the guardianship issue by allowing educational decisions to be made by the parents, guardian, or homeless children and youth in the absence of parents or guardian.

Financial Constraints

The issue of financial constraints affects both homeless children and school districts, although from very different perspectives. Both homeless children and the schools they attend may experience a shortage of funds needed for their education. This shortage can lead to conflicts and problems for both sides.

Family-related financial problems. Homeless children and youth are often homeless because they or their family cannot afford a place to live. In large cities, homeless families frequently reside in dangerous, crowded hotels; in smaller communities, they may reside in a setting just as unsafe and undesirable. Homeless families have difficulty meeting basic needs not only for shelter but also for food, adequate clothing, and safety. Waxman and Reyes (1987) reported from a survey that one of the most serious problems faced by the homeless was lack of food and poor nutrition. Further complicating their lives is the fact that many homeless families also have other problems, such as abuse, neglect, criminal behavior, or drug and alcohol abuse. Unless basic needs are met, educational programs will remain virtually meaningless.

> The overwhelming nature of these and other problems force parents to concentrate on securing food, clothing and safe shelter. Consequently, the issue of education and school attendance no longer holds the same priority in the lives of those families (New York State Department of Education 1989, p. 5).

While schooling may be "free," there are clearly delineated financial costs that are the responsibility of the individual child, such as locker fees, textbook fees, lab fees, etc. Even if these fees are waived, there are other related personal expenses, for example, field trip expenses, gym clothes, pens, pencils, paper, etc. The inability to buy supplemental educational supplies may hinder the effort to learn and set the homeless student apart.

School-related financial problems. On the other side of the financial issue is the fact that school districts are charged with providing education to children of bona fide residents. Because school districts rely heavily on local sources of revenue, they are likely to resist enrollment of non-resident students without a commensurate increase in local revenue. Smaller school districts are particularly susceptible to a negative financial impact if temporary shelters are located within their boundaries. This situation can lead to an influx of large numbers of new students and make educational planning extremely difficult.

Paying for the education of children who are not permanent residents can be a fiscal burden on a community and can result in opposition from school and community leaders. The waiver of tuition and school fees only increases the burden. One method of dealing with this situation is some form of additional state revenues, either in the form of categorical funding or as supplemental state aid.

The frequent and sudden movement of homeless families into and out of shelters makes it virtually impossible for schools to adequately plan. Pupil-teacher ratios may fluctuate dramatically and classroom materials may be in short supply when homeless children join a class. Additional costs to the school district include clerical time for enroll-

ment and placement of students who may be staying for only a short time and transportation fees.

According to Ely (1987), 15% of shelters surveyed cited lack of transportation as a contributing factor for children not attending school. Public transportation may not be available or affordable. Some private shelters provide transportation; but the cost can be prohibitive, especially if the child is enrolled in the district from which she or he came. Some cities often provide transit passes, but delays in obtaining them are common.

While not a financial concern, an additional problem related to transportation is the actual time required to get to and from school. Children in larger cities who are enrolled in their former districts may spend hours getting to and from their schools. By the time they get to school they may be hungry and tired and ill-prepared to launch into the rigors of schooling (Kozol 1988).

Institutional Impediments

Lack of records. Of the school districts Ely surveyed, 25% reported "difficulty in registering or actual denial due to lack of records from a previous school district" (1987, p. 10). Many states require immunization records and grade reports for school enrollment. Families who lose their home and belongings, and youth living on their own, often are unable to produce school records. Further complicating the matter, parents of runaway and throwaway youth may refuse to furnish records if they are on bad terms with their children.

Placement in inappropriate programs. Homeless children may need special education due to the developmental lags many of them experience (Rivlin 1986). However, they may not stay in one school district long enough for their needs to be fully identified, to have testing performed, and to be placed in special education or other appropriate programs. Some school districts may wait to find out if the child is going to stay in the district before spending the time and money

for testing. Thus when a homeless child is enrolled in school, he or she may be underserved or inappropriately served.

Lack of coordination. A lack of communication and cooperation between school districts and between districts and the state may result in, "delays, an inability to track homeless students, overlapping services, and ultimately, underserved and unserved students" (Office of Education in Pennsylvania 1988, p. 5). Questions concerning laws and the interpretation of laws also may cause delays or denial of education for the homeless child.

Educational performance problems. Homeless children and youth often experience developmental delays in their academic skills. Numerous factors (for example, poor and unsafe living conditions; breakdown of family and social structures; abruptly starting and stopping school; no place or routine for studying when at home; adjustments to new teachers, new students, and new surroundings) diminish the chances for success in academic settings.

Homeless students tend to begin school at a disadvantage – a situation that worsens the longer the students and their families remain homeless and the longer they remain in school. Bassuk and Rosenberg (1988) found in their study of homeless families in Boston that 40% of the children were failing or performing below average work, 25% were in special classes, and 43% had repeated one grade. In a review of educational performance among homeless students from the San Diego area, Stronge (1989) found that on the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) homeless students' average score was approximately one year below level in reading, spelling, and mathematics for students in grades four through six. Students in grades seven and eight were averaging one to three years below grade placement.

Homeless children also appear to have an exceptionally high dropout rate. The dropout rate for the poorest children in New York is approximately 70%. Kozol (1988) suggests that for homeless children the rate will be even higher.

Social and Psychological Concerns

While academic success is fundamental to breaking the grip of poverty (one of the primary correlates of homelessness), educators may not be able to help these students reach academic goals until their pressing social and psychological needs have been addressed. In particular, educators must address issues surrounding personal stress, social acceptance, and self-esteem if education of the homeless student is to succeed.

Stress. The uncertainty in the lives of homeless children as a result of their transient status is an obvious form of stress. Not knowing how long a place can be called home, moving from school to school, and losing track of friends and perhaps family become the overriding issues in their lives. Until some semblance of order and stability can be restored to their lives, academic concerns may be irrelevant.

While the schools themselves may not be able to remove the overriding stress factors, they can provide an environment that is a safe haven from the turmoil of daily life. Schools can provide homeless children with "a much-needed sense of place and continuity that they otherwise lack in their fragmented lives" (Ely 1987, p. 1).

Social acceptance. Homeless children who do make it to school are often stigmatized by their peers and sometimes by their teachers. The classroom can be a strange and unfriendly environment for homeless students. Differences in dress and appearance, nonconformance with accepted social norms, and poor academic performance can alienate these students from school. Simply "fitting in" can be a major accomplishment.

The lack of stability in homeless children's lives has been associated with inappropriate social behavior. Behavior manifestations such as aggressiveness, withdrawal, and apathy serve to make school unacceptable to these students and the students unacceptable to the school. Bassuk and Rosenberg (1988) found that homeless children are more likely to develop behavior problems than their peers – problems that can cause them to be thrown out of school instead of receiving help.

Self-esteem. Homelessness places individuals in a position of losing control over their own destinies. Day-to-day survival becomes the overwhelming factor dominating their lives. In the face of such adversities, the self-concept and self-esteem of individuals are at risk. Research confirms the strong relationship between self-concept and academic performance. If students look upon themselves as failures, due either to their emotional state resulting from their homelessness or from concomitant factors resulting in poor school performance, it is unlikely they will be able to achieve any sense of academic success.

Remedies. If homeless students are to have any hope of academic success, schools must attend to their social and psychological well-being. Homeless students need understanding, not sympathy. In his research regarding abandoned children, Felsman (1985) suggested that empathy (understanding) is essential in the development of trust. And trust undoubtedly is a precursor to a productive educational environment. Sympathy, on the other hand, was viewed as communicating arrogance. Homeless children and youth experience enough negative attitudes on their own without receiving them from the educational system.

Society traditionally has viewed street children in one of three ways: as victims of an unfortunate fate who need to be rescued, as delinquents who need to be disciplined and controlled, or as individuals whose existence is to be ignored. Rather than accepting any of these views, Tyler and his colleagues (1986) argue for a preventive psychosocial approach to working with these children – an approach that emphasizes students assuming responsibility for their own survival by choice or by circumstance as an act of self-empowerment. Schools can be most effective in providing education to homeless children and youth by facilitating the development of power and purpose in their lives.

Federal Legislation for the Homeless

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-77), named for the bill's chief sponsor, is the first comprehensive emergency aid program for America's homeless. The Act contains approximately 20 separate initiatives to assist homeless individuals, among which are policies and programs for educational services.

Congress appropriated funding for the legislation during the first two years (1987 and 1988) at approximately $700 million. Of this amount, $4.6 million for 1987 and $4.7 million for 1988 were appropriated for education grants to the states and territories.

Title VII-B of the Act, the education portion of the legislation, is administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The Act authorized the Secretary of Education to provide funding to the states for the purpose of addressing the educational needs of homeless children and youth. Under this program each state received funding at no less than $50,000 per year during the first two years. The states and territories were required in the first year to use the funds for the purpose of gathering data regarding the number of homeless children and youth residing in their boundaries and to identify problems associated with educating these students. In the second year, the states and territories were required to develop plans for the provision of educational services to homeless children and youth (Dorsett 1987; Jackson 1989).

The educational portion of the McKinney Act (Subtitle B – Education for Homeless Children and Youth) is based on congressional policy that: 1) each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth will have access to a free, appropriate public education consistent with the services that are provided to children who are residents of the state and consistent with school attendance laws; and 2) any state that has a residency law as part of its compulsory school attendance laws must review the law and revise it as necessary to ensure that homeless children and youth are afforded a free, appropriate public education (42 USC 11431). More specifically, the basic standard employed in Title VII-B of the Act is that homeless children and youth "should have the same access to elementary and secondary education as children whose parents are fully established residents of the State" (U.S. Department of Education 1987, p. 1).

The Act required each state to appoint a coordinator of education of homeless children and youth. The coordinators were required to develop and implement the state plans and to prepare and submit reports periodically to the U.S. Secretary of Education. They also were required to perform the following functions:

1. gather data on the number of homeless children and youth in the state;
2. determine the nature and extent of problems of access to, and placement of, homeless students in elementary and secondary schools;
3. identify the special needs of homeless children.

The Act also required that the plans adopted by the states contain provisions to determine placement and to resolve disputes regarding placement of homeless children and youth. These state plans also must require, to the extent practical under state law, that local school boards:

1. continue the student's education in the school district of origin for the remainder of the school year, or

2. enroll the student in the school district where the student actually lives.

The determination of where the student attends school is to be made in the best interest of the student.

The law specifically enumerates educational services that homeless children and youth are to be provided if they meet eligibility requirements. These include compensatory education programs for the disadvantaged, handicapped education programs, programs for students with limited English proficiency, vocational education programs, programs for gifted and talented students, and school meal programs. In essence, homeless children and youth must be afforded the same or comparable educational services as the state deems appropriate for all students.

Programs that Work

There are few educational programs designed specifically for homeless children and youth. The development of those programs that do exist parallels the growth of the homeless family population during the 1980s. A review of the existing programs reveals that two predominant models of service have emerged: transitional and mainstreamed programs.

Transitional Programs

Transitional programs tend to operate in conjunction with temporary housing facilities for the homeless. These schools are designed to provide an intermediate, or transitional, educational program for children whose families are temporarily housed in a shelter. While the transitional schools cater primarily to shelter clientele, some also accept children from families that present themselves from other homeless settings (for example, sleeping in a car).

The common thread that runs through this type of program is the temporary nature of the educational placement. It is not uncommon for children to enroll in a transitional school one day and be gone a few days later; few programs accept or retain students for more than 90 consecutive days. However, children may enroll or withdraw several times during an academic year, depending largely on the admission rules of the school and the affiliated shelter. Transitional pro-

grams tend to have a common philosophic base and selected practices, yet each is distinctive. Three programs – Tacoma, Salt Lake City, and San Diego – are presented here as representative of emerging programs that work effectively with the homeless student population.

Tacoma, Washington. The Eugene P. Tone School Project was established in 1988 as a collaborative venture between the Tacoma Public Schools and the Tacoma/Pierce County YWCA. The original concept for the school was developed in the early 1980s with the observation by school officials that children who were identified as temporarily homeless due to domestic violence were experiencing personal adjustment problems and were adapting poorly in regular school settings.

The Tone School was developed for the purpose of providing homeless students with an educational program that minimizes the disruption in their lives and facilitates their transition back into a permanent school setting. Specifically, the program was developed with the following goals:

1. Provide a safe educational environment for children living in area shelters, in cars, under bridges, in abandoned buildings, and in other homeless settings.
2. Provide an instructional delivery system focused on individual diagnosis and prescriptive teaching.
3. Provide a full complement of support services needed to assist with the social and emotional impact of homelessness.
4. Provide assistance in the eventual placement and follow-up of children in permanent school settings.

The target population for the Tone School Project is children with their families and school-age children living alone without a regular place to stay. A maximum of 45 children can be served daily; the average length of stay is approximately two to three weeks.

A multidisciplinary team serves the comprehensive education needs of the K-8 students enrolled in the school. In addition to certified

teachers and a teacher assistant, the services of a school social worker, school counselor, and school nurse are provided regularly. Special education services also are available as needed. A job description for each of these staff positions has been developed, reflecting the unique needs of the homeless population. Beyond the traditional academic and school-related support services, the school also employs a resource/volunteer coordinator. This person is responsible for coordinating a variety of expanded services for the school including volunteers, a clothing bank, supplemental food services, special events, and donations. Bus transportation is provided by the school system for children living in shelters and in other transitional housing.

The shelters in which the children are housed administer strict entrance and exit requirements. While a family is in the shelter, an intensive effort is made to assist the members in finding jobs, housing, and public assistance. By coordinating the social service effort, the families are assisted in moving out of the ranks of the homeless and, subsequently, their need for special schooling in the Tone School. Since its inception in 1988, the school has served more than 300 students each year.

Salt Lake City, Utah. The Salt Lake City Shelter School was established in 1985 as a joint venture with the Travelers Aid Society. Teachers are provided by the school district, and the Society provides classroom space in the building where it operates a family shelter.

Soon after the shelter was opened in 1982, the need was recognized for the children of homeless families to continue their education. They were invited to attend the public schools, but few actually attended. Officials believed that continuing the children's education was imperative. If traditional means of schooling would not work, an alternative educational delivery system had to be devised. Thus, the decision was made to bring the school to the students.

To provide guidance in developing its educational programs, Shelter School officials adopted the following philosophy statement:

> All children are entitled to a free public education, and this should be provided in a supportive, meaningful way. The students in the Shelter School are able to continue immediately with their needed studies.
>
> When families are in transition, the need is strong to have stability. The families at the shelter do not have the usual support from neighborhoods, families, friends, and institutions. The Shelter School provides support while helping the students academically.

On-site education is provided at the school for children in grades K-6. A curriculum consisting of reading and language arts (50% of instruction time), mathematics (25%), and art, social studies, science, and music (25%) is provided. Each student's strengths and weaknesses in basic skills are assessed when they enter the program. Based on the assessment, individualized learning packets are developed, with each learning packet reflecting the requirements of the school district's elementary curriculum. Pre- and post-tests are conducted daily or weekly as needed, due to the transient nature of students' enrollment.

In addition to its academic focus, affective objectives have been developed for the school. Guidance, social role modeling, arrangement of the school setting, and scheduling are intended to accommodate the students' emotional needs. Specific emotional needs of the students that are addressed include stability and social skills:

1. Stability is fostered by helping students deal with angry feelings, culture shock, and feelings of crisis and stress. Coping skills are taught, and positive feelings about school are engendered through successful experiences and the development of one-to-one relationships with teachers.
2. Social skills are fostered by teaching acceptable behavior patterns and ways of effectively interacting with others.

Enrollment typically ranges between 15 and 25 students daily. Students stay in the program an average of six weeks, with some children remaining as long as 12 weeks. The Salt Lake City Shelter School serves approximately 300 students each year.

San Diego, California. The population of homeless families in San Diego increased steadily during the 1980s, with a substantial growth in the number of homeless school-age children and youth residing within the San Diego Unified School District. In response, the school district developed a comprehensive referral and placement service for transient students, which advocated enrollment in regular division programs whenever possible.

Nonetheless, school officials found that homeless families were experiencing difficulty in gaining access to educational services for their children. The lack of a permanent address and the fear and embarrassment of being homeless were identified as factors that often prohibited attendance in regular education programs.

The County Office of Education opened the Harbor Summit School in 1988 to ameliorate the problems faced by families in continuing their children's education during a period of temporary homelessness. The school is designed for children residing with their families at the St. Vincent de Paul-Joan Kroc Shelter, which has had more than 15,000 children among its residents since opening in 1983. Many of the children at the shelter had been out of school for an extended period of time and were likely to remain so without the intervention of a transitional school.

The Harbor Summit School, located in a building adjacent to the Shelter, provides four hours instruction daily, 12 months a year, for children in grades K-8. The school district provides the program with three full-time teachers and three teacher assistants, along with other staff members required for administrative and support services. Additionally, a foster grandparents program has been initiated to increase the personalized attention each child receives while enrolled in the school.

The instructional program is designed on an individualized basis, focusing on the particular strengths and needs of each student. The County Office of Education provides the instructional resources considered necessary for this type of individualized program, for example, computer-assisted instruction.

The individualized setting of a transition school such as Harbor Summit allows the children a brief re-entry period, where they have time to brush up on skills and to build up confidence and self-esteem, as well as to re-adapt to the structure of a school setting. The teachers are prepared to deal with these children and their special needs and fill many gaps for attention, affection, and educational needs.

It is more cost effective to provide such auxiliary services as counseling and health care at one site rather than duplicating these services at all the schools in the San Diego Unified School District. It also saves the children from stigmatization as "shelter kids" in other school settings, where other children are not likely to understand some of the problems connected with their homelessness. In addition, attendance at a transition school saves children the embarrassment of not having funds to "do what other children do," that is, purchase snacks and books from the book club, attend field trips, have the latest fashions, or even purchase necessary gym clothes.

Following the completion of the regular academic program each day at noon, additional programming is provided during the afternoon on an optional basis. Where extended care is needed to accommodate working parents, children may remain for after-school activities that last until 4:30 or 6:00 p.m. The Harbor Summit School serves an average of 40 to 60 students per day.

Mainstreamed Programs

Rather than create separate, transitional schools, the mainstreamed approach to educating homeless children and youth seeks to accommodate the students within regular education programs. The prevailing philosophy behind this approach is that homeless children are like all other children with one exception — they are temporarily without a permanent home.

Most mainstreamed programs acknowledge the need for some modifications in the education program. These modifications tend to reflect additional or adapted academic and support services, such as

academic tutorial assistance, special transportation, and coordination of school and social services. Regardless of the specific accommodations that might characterize mainstreamed programs, the programs are intended to continue homeless children's education in as routine a fashion as possible, thus establishing an element of normalcy in the otherwise disrupted lives of these students. Two examples of the mainstreamed model are presented here: Venice, California, reflecting a single-school effort, and New York City, reflecting a comprehensive citywide effort in the nation's largest public school system.

Venice, California. The Coeur d'Alene Elementary School is located in an ocean-front community within the Los Angeles Unified School District. The school is inundated with children of homeless families who have congregated here at the end of a western migration and because a nearby shelter for the homeless insists that children attend school (Mydans 1989). Of the 413 elementary schools within the school district, Coeur d'Alene has the highest percentage of transient students. At any given point in the academic year, fully one-fourth to one-third of the approximately 300 students in the school are from homeless families (Armstrong 1989).

The extensive influx of transient students into the school has resulted in the development of special programming to make it more relevant for this segment of the student population. School officials noted that homeless children often come to school in poor health and exhibit social and emotional adjustment problems. One teacher summarized the problems homeless children bring with them: "They came in with behavior problems, and you can understand it with all the instability in their lives. Not getting enough sleep, never knowing whether they are going to leave the next day. In one year they can go to a dozen schools" (Mydans 1989).

The school has provided the services of a counselor, psychologist, nurse, and additional teaching assistants through funds from a special grant. Additionally, a program designed to foster self-esteem among the students has been initiated. In essence, the school is at-

tempting to provide an appropriate education for homeless children and youth through a coordinated program of regular and specialized initiatives.

New York City. The New York City Public Schools' effort on behalf of students living in temporary housing is perhaps the most comprehensive mainstreamed program currently available. The program began operating in September 1986 and initially was limited to a small number of community school districts with large numbers of homeless students. The program was expanded the following school year to include additional school districts and was organized into regional "Hubs," which coordinated services for all temporarily housed students. Beginning with the 1988-89 school year, the Students Living in Temporary Housing Program was expanded to all 32 community school districts, high school districts, and citywide special education programs. Reflecting this commitment to educate homeless children and youth is the following goal statement taken from the Board of Education's *Manual for Students in Temporary Housing Program:*

> The issue of homelessness has been one of growing concern over the last decade. Families housed in temporary facilities require support and assistance which will stabilize them until they acquire permanent housing. Public and private agencies are involved and committed to working with this population including: Human Resources Administration, Board of Education, Parks Department, Housing Preservation and Development, Office of Cultural Affairs, community-based organizations, not-for-profit agencies and private corporations.
>
> The Board of Education has a commitment to provide for the continuity of educational instruction and services for all school-age children who are residing in temporary housing.

Funds have been allocated to each community school district to provide programming for students who are attending school or residing in facilities located within the district. These programs have been funded through a combination of sources including local tax-levy funds and state monies provided for an attendance improvement and dropout

prevention program and a program for pupils with special educational needs.

Administrative and support services are provided to families of homeless students and to the schools as part of the ongoing effort to match the unique needs of a homeless population with the services available in regular school settings. These services include family intake/record management, school placement and registration, transportation, and attendance reporting and monitoring. Specific support services include:

Family Intake and Record Management Systems

- Identification of families on a daily basis (for example, examine temporary hotel/shelter registers).
- Interviews with families conducted in the parent's primary language.
- Discussion of school options and support services available.

School Placement and Registration

- Parents are provided two options in placement: 1) children may continue to attend the school at which they are registered, and 2) children may transfer to the school zoned for the temporary housing site. Both options include regular education and special education programs.
- Follow-up verification for registration and attendance provided.

Transportation

- Free bus/train passes issued to students K-12.
- Distance requirements waived for all transportation services.
- Determination of most direct route of travel with NYC Transit Authority and coordinated with local school.

Attendance Reporting and Monitoring

- Collect, review, analyze, and evaluate attendance data for policy planning and program development.

Each community school district is required to formulate individual plans to provide services to the students in the homeless population

living or attending school within the district. Specific services offered to students residing in temporary housing include:

- Improvement of students' attendance and achievement.
- Linkage between district/school staff, parents, and hotel/shelter personnel.
- Remedial, tutorial, and enrichment programs.
- Individual and group guidance services.
- Homework assistance programs.
- Recreational after-school programs that may include dinner.

The central administration also provides technical assistance and support programs, including:

- Training and staff development for personnel.
- Review of district plans and approval of funding.
- Assistance in the development of attendance improvement programs.
- Follow-up procedures for absentee students residing in other districts.
- Coordination of transportation services.
- Provision of educational and other relevant data on students requiring school placement in order to ensure the continuation of their education.
- Coordination with Human Resources Administration for the location of families that have moved from the hotel/shelter without a forwarding address.
- Maintenance of a 24-hour educational telephone hot line that enables school personnel, parents, and students to receive quick responses to hotel/shelter concerns.

As of January 1990, there were 64 hotels and shelters housing homeless families in New York City. Among these temporary residents there were approximately 4,000 school-age children and youth.

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness

The roots of homelessness in American society are complex and varied. There are no simple solutions to this phenomenon. Even with a concerted national effort to provide adequate low-cost housing and to remedy other ills in society that contribute to the problem, homelessness will not disappear in the near future.

Educational problems are not the root of homelessness; however, they must be acknowledged as contributing factors. While providing appropriate educational opportunities to these students may not result in the disappearance of homelessness, ignoring education for the homeless will most certainly perpetuate it.

Some of the barriers hindering the education of homeless children are fairly obvious ones that require changes in laws and policies. Once these barriers are recognized and changed, homeless children will have better access to education. However, other barriers are more complicated. Some problems reside with the children themselves. Overcoming these inhibiting factors will require greater understanding of the homeless and innovative practices within the schools.

Some innovative educational programs in cities and states across the country have begun dealing successfully with the new and complex issues posed by homeless children and youth. These programs are beginning to meet the challenge of educating this generation of homeless children and youth before they become the uneducated homeless parents of the next generation. However, more innovative educational programs are needed, along with economic, domestic, and other changes, to help break the cycle of homelessness.

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